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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/933,534	08/20/2001	David A. Grilli	TRW(AP)5727	5816

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EXAMINER

SMITH, JULIE KNECHT

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3682

DATE MAILED: 02/04/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

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Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/933,534

Applicant(s)

GRILLI ET AL.

Examiner

Julie K Smith

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 November 2004.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-12 and 14-37 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 29-37 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-12 and 14-28 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 20 August 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 1, 3-8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18-24, 27 and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sawada et al. (Re. 36,898) in view of Reidy et al. (6,386,579). Sawada et al. disclose a steering wheel with a rim portion, a spoke portion, and a foamed padding material, adhered to the spoke portions, having a first portion (1b) with a substantially uniform cell density and a second portion (1a) with a continuous external surface free of interruption by a cell, the padding material comprising a gasified chemical foaming agent (see col. 8, lines 10-12) and a thermoplastic polyolefin elastomer, such as polypropylene, with a shore hardness of less than 90. The foaming agent is either exothermic or endothermic and the foamed padding includes a colorant, stabilizers, or fillers (see col. 4, lines 25-36). The wheel is manufactured by injection molding. The elastomer and chemical foaming agent are mixed, the mixture foamed and then adhered to a steering wheel armature to form the padding material. The elastomer is melted to fit the mold.

Sawada et al. discloses a cover, as claimed, but does not disclose the cover covering the spoke and rim portions of the steering wheel. However, Reidy et al. teaches an airbag cover that covers the spoke and rim portions of the steering wheel.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the padding of Sawada et al. with the teachings of Reidy et al. so as to provide a cover that is adhered to the spoke and rim portions of the steering wheel to ensure strength and continuity across the steering wheel, while providing good wear characteristics along the rim of the steering wheel.

Further, Sawada et al. discloses a foamed padding, as claimed, but does not disclose whether the material is plasticizer-free. However, Reidy et al. discloses a foamed padding for a steering wheel that plasticizer-free.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the padding of Sawada et al. with the teachings of Reidy et al. to omit plasticizers, as they can migrate to the surface of the padding and cause problems with adhesion or paints.

3. Claims 9, 10, 16, 17 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sawada et al. in view of Reidy et al. as applied to claims 1, 3-8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18-24, 27 and 28 above, and further in view of Braun et al. (WO 99/10419). The reference combination set forth above discloses the claimed invention except for the encapsulation of the foaming agent. However, Braun et al. disclose that it is known in the art to provide an impregnated polyolefin granule containing a foaming agent.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to provide the foaming agent of the reference combination set forth above within a capsule, as taught by Braun et al. in order to avoid contamination of the surroundings.

Allowable Subject Matter

4. Claims 29-37 are allowed.

Response to Arguments

5. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1, 3-6, 8-12 and 14-28 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Regarding claim 7, applicant argues that Reidy et al. does not teach an airbag cover that is plasticizer-free, but merely teaches against plasticizer migration. Reidy et al. discloses that in the past steering wheels and airbag covers were made separately and the steering wheels contained plasticizers for strength. However, Reidy et al. integrates the airbag cover and the steering wheel by making them both out of the same elastomer, thus eliminating the need for the steering wheel containing the plasticizer. Therefore, the cover is plasticizer-free.

Conclusion

6. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the

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shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Julie K Smith whose telephone number is 703-305-3948. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8-5:30, (Every other Friday off).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David A Bucci can be reached on 703-308-3668. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

JRS
Jks

January 25, 2005


WILLIAM C. BOYCE
PRIMARY EXAMINER